

VZCZCXRO0429  
PP RUEHFK RUEHKSO RUEHNAG RUEHNH  
DE RUEHKO #4159/01 2500126  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
P 070126Z SEP 07  
FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7327  
INFO RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY  
RHEHAAA/THE WHITE HOUSE WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RUEAWJA/USDOJ WASHDC PRIORITY  
RULSDMK/USDOT WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUCPDOG/USDOC WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC//J5//  
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI  
RHHMHBA/COMPACFLT PEARL HARBOR HI  
RHMFIUU/HQ PACAF HICKAM AFB HI//CC/PA//  
RUALSFJ/COMUSJAPAN YOKOTA AB JA//J5/JO21//  
RUYNAAAC/COMNAVFORJAPAN YOKOSUKA JA  
RUAYJAA/CTF 72  
RUEHNH/AMCONSUL NAHA 5452  
RUEHFK/AMCONSUL FUKUOKA 3028  
RUEHOK/AMCONSUL OSAKA KOBE 6658  
RUEHNAG/AMCONSUL NAGOYA 2009  
RUEHKSO/AMCONSUL SAPPORO 3765  
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 8834  
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 4893  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 5804

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 10 TOKYO 004159

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR E, P, EB, EAP/J, EAP/P, EAP/PD, PA;  
WHITE HOUSE/NSC/NEC; JUSTICE FOR STU CHEMTOB IN ANTI-TRUST DIVISION;  
TREASURY/OASIA/IMI/JAPAN; DEPT PASS USTR/PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE;  
SECDEF FOR JCS-J-5/JAPAN,  
DASD/ISA/EAPR/JAPAN; DEPT PASS ELECTRONICALLY TO USDA  
FAS/ITP FOR SCHROETER; PACOM HONOLULU FOR PUBLIC DIPLOMACY ADVISOR;  
CINCPAC FLT/PA/ COMNAVFORJAPAN/PA.

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [OIIP](#) [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [ECON](#) [ELAB](#) [JA](#)

SUBJECT: JAPANESE MORNING PRESS HIGHLIGHTS 09/07/07

Index:

War on terror:

- 1) US House of Representatives passes resolution praising Japan for its anti-terrorism contributions
- 2) Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) against new anti-terror law concept but may consider Japan providing logistical support to ISAF in Afghanistan
- 3) DPJ Secretary General Hatoyama says cooperation with NATO in Afghanistan is one option instead of continued MSDF service in the Indian Ocean
- 4) Afghan reporter gets direct interview from DPJ official on party's anti-terror stand
- 5) New USFJ commander picked
- 6) Japan, China in foreign ministers' meeting at APEC conference agree to cooperate to fight global warming

North Korea problem:

- 7) Japan's two days of talks with North Korea ends without progress
- 8) Chief Cabinet Secretary Yosano is forward looking about humanitarian aid to flood-stricken North Korea

DPJ in action:

- 9) DPJ focus in upcoming Diet session will be pensions and scandals
- 10) DPJ policy chief Uejima plans to pursue subsidy misuse, focusing

on farm ministry

Daily scandal sheet:

11) Nikai faction also has missing political-fund issue, as does former Prime Minister Mori and former Environment Minister Kawasaki

12) Former Prime Minister Mori's political branch is missing 6 million in political donations

13) Former Health Minister Niwa kept double account books for 500,000 yen printing costs

14) Former farm minister Tamazawa, who just quit the LDP over money scandal, could face charge of violation of public election law

15) Vice Minister of Agriculture Kobayashi to resign for impropriety

16) DPJ also has a scandal involving the party's showcase lawmaker, as revealed in tabloid weekly

17) APEC: US, Japan vs. China on product safety issue

Articles:

1) US House thanks Japan for antiterror cooperation

ASAHI (Page 4) (Full)  
September 7, 2007

WASHINGTON-The US House of Representatives, meeting in a plenary session on Sept. 5, adopted a resolution thanking Japan for its security efforts, such as Japan's contribution to the war on terror in the Indian Ocean, with 405 ayes and no nays. In late July, the House adopted a resolution on comfort women. However, that resolution raised concerns about its negative impact on Japan-US relations. The Congress showed consideration for Japan's

TOKYO 00004159 002 OF 010

contributions with the resolution this time.

Touching on the US House resolution, Chief Cabinet Secretary Yosano stated: "This shows that the US House of Representatives recognizes the importance of our bilateral alliance. I welcome it on the Japanese government's part."

2) DPJ likely to oppose new legislation in addition to an extension of the antiterrorism law; Idea of allowing SDF's "participation in logistic support" floated in DPJ

YOMIURI (Page 4) (Full)  
September 7, 2007

The main opposition Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ or Minshuto) is intensifying its opposition to extending the Antiterrorism Special Measures Law, an issue that will take center stage at an upcoming extraordinary session of the Diet to be convened on Sept. 10. The government and the ruling parties, which want to continue the Maritime Self-Defense Force's (MSDF) refueling activities in the Indian Ocean, are considering creating a new law that will reflect the DPJ's assertions, but the tide of opinion in the DPJ is that it will be difficult for the party to accept the new law.

At a press conference yesterday, DPJ Deputy President Kan said firmly that if there is no request from the United Nations, Japan should not send the Self-Defense Forces (SDF) abroad, noting: "Our party's fundamental rule about an overseas dispatch of the Self-Defense Forces (SDF) is that we allow it within the bounds of the Constitution if there is a request from the United Nations."

The government uses the UN Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 1368 adopted on the day after the terrorist attacks in the United States in September 2001 as a basis for the Antiterrorism Special Measures Law. This resolution is seen as an antiterrorism resolution and it says "We ask the international community to make even more efforts to prevent and restrain terrorism." The DPJ contends that this resolution cannot be used as a basis for that law, noting that "This resolution is not intended for a specific purpose. It does not directly specify any operation of war like forming a multinational force."

DPJ President Ozawa made this critical comment in a speech on Aug. 21: "President Bush declared, 'It's a war of self-defense for the US. We don't have to have either a UN resolution or approval from the international community.' Given this, it is really strange for the US to ask for help at present."

An idea of creating a new law is being floated in the government and the governing coalition. In this regard, a mid-level DPJ lawmaker said: "I can't vote for new legislation as long as the real aim of a new law is to continue the MSDF's refueling activities even if the new law reflects the DPJ's previous assertions like information disclosure and prior approval for a dispatch of MSDF vessels."

The DPJ intends to use the right to investigate state affairs during deliberations in the Upper House and put pressure on the government and the ruling bloc to disclose information involving the actual state and effects of the MSDF's activities as well as activities of the US forces that have received refueling services. The DPJ's tactic is to take time for deliberations and delay a vote until the antiterrorism law expires on Nov. 1. An idea of submitting a bill

TOKYO 00004159 003 OF 010

repealing the antiterrorism law to the Upper House in order to immediately withdraw MSDF vessels from the Indian Ocean is also being floated in the DPJ.

The DPJ also intends to form a set of its own assistance measures for Afghanistan, including humanitarian aid, in preparation for deliberations on a bill extending the antiterrorism law. In December 2001, the UNSC adopted Resolution 1386 concerning a dispatch of an International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to Afghanistan. DPJ Secretary General Hatoyama said in a speech in Hamamatsu City

SIPDIS

yesterday: "I presume a focus of talks in the weeks ahead will be whether it is possible for Japan to take part in logistic support for the ISAF."

3) Hatoyama terms cooperation with NATO an "option" for DPJ

ASAHI (Page 4) (Full)  
September 7, 2007

Yukio Hatoyama, secretary general of the leading opposition Democratic Party of Japan (Minshuto), delivered a speech yesterday in the city of Hamamatsu. Referring to his party's counterproposal to the government's plan for extending the Antiterrorism Special Measures Law, Hatoyama indicated that the DPJ would consider cooperating with the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) led by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in Afghanistan as one of Japan's possible options. "It's extremely important to discuss whether Japan can back up the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF, currently deployed to Afghanistan)."

4) Afghan reporter directly asks DPJ's Watanabe for Japan's continued involvement in assistance

ASAHI (Page 4) (Full)  
September 7, 2007

"Our country also wants to cooperate in an even more proactive way." With this, Kozo Watanabe, a supreme advisor to the leading opposition Democratic Party of Japan (Minshuto), stressed a stance of extending cooperation to assist Afghanistan when he was interviewed by a press reporter from Afghanistan in the Diet yesterday.

DPJ President Ozawa is opposed to extending the Antiterror Special Measures Law, under which Japan has been backing up the antiterror campaign going on in Afghanistan. The Afghan reporter asked Watanabe for Japan's continued involvement in assistance with Afghanistan's reconstruction. However, Watanabe assumed a wait-and-see attitude, saying: "The Diet will continue to discuss this matter in an extraordinary session. I can't say which is what." Watanabe chairs a parliamentary league for friendship between Japan and Afghanistan.

5) Rice named as 1st black to command USFJ

ASAHI (Page 4) (Full)  
September 7, 2007

The headquarters of US Forces Japan announced yesterday that President Bush has nominated US Air Force Maj. Gen. Edward Rice, currently serving as the vice commander of Pacific Air Forces in Hawaii, to succeed USAF Lt. Gen. Bruce Wright as USFJ commanding general. Rice will be the first Afro-American (black) to command

TOKYO 00004159 004 OF 010

USFJ.

6) Japan, China to work together to cope with global warming

ASAHI (Page 4) (Full)  
September 7, 2007

SYDNEY-Foreign Minister Machimura and Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi met yesterday in Sydney and agreed to create an international scheme for coping with global warming. This is the first time for Japan and China to set forth proactive cooperation on this issue at a ministerial level, according to the Foreign Ministry. Machimura invited Yang to visit Japan, and Yang also invited Machimura to visit China. They positively responded to each other's invitation.

According to a Japanese briefing, Yang offered to cooperate with Japan for substantive results on a post-Kyoto Protocol framework beyond 2013.

7) Japan-DPRK working group talks end without any progress; DPRK "ready to set stage for talks" with JAL Yodo-go plane hijackers

YOMIURI (Page 1) (Full)  
September 7, 2007

Yuichiro Nakamura, Shuhei Kuromi, Ulan Bator

The Japan-North Korea working group yesterday wrapped up the second day of talks at the Mongolian Guest House in Ulan Bator. On the issue of Japanese nationals abducted by North Korea, one of the focuses of the talks, the North Korean delegation was negative about reinvestigating the abductees, with one official arguing, "Given the currently worsened relations between the two countries, we are not in a situation to further investigate them." However, both sides agreed to meet at frequent intervals in the future by holding, for instance, a working group session.

The Japanese team demanded a reinvestigation of abductees and a handover of abduction suspects, including three Japanese hijackers of the JAL "Yodo-go" airliner.

The North Korean team did not make any mention of specific responses to those requests, but it did not use the expression "the abduction issue has been already settled" and was slightly softer in its attitude than at the first round of the working group talks in March of this year, where it walked out of the conference room in the middle of the session. After the talks, Kim Chul Ho, deputy director-general of the North Korean Foreign Ministry's Asian Affairs Bureau told reporters: "The gaps between Japan and our country remain wide. We will discuss how to reduce them."

On the question of handing the Yodo-go hijackers over to Japan, Kim indicated his intention to allow the Japanese government to meet the hijackers in North Korea, saying, "It is a matter the Japanese government and the people concerned with the Yodo-go case should discuss. We are ready to set a stage for both sides to meet."

The fact that the hijackers reside in North Korea has been one of the grounds for the United States to list North Korea as a state sponsor of terrorism. Perhaps because the North Koreans want their country to be removed at an early date from the list of countries sponsoring terrorism, they would become willing to (hand them over

to Japan.)

The participants in the talks included Ambassador Yoshiki Mine in charge of Japan-North Korea diplomatic normalization talks from Japan and his North Korean counterpart Song Il Ho. The session lasted for three hours and 15 minutes including a break.

8) Yosano: I did not say that humanitarian aid to North Korea should be separated from other diplomatic issues

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)  
September 7, 2007

Chief Cabinet Secretary Kaoru Yosano in a press conference yesterday said about humanitarian aid to North Korea: "I did not say that it should be separated from other diplomatic issues."

Yosano noted in a press conference on September 4: "There is a possibility to overcome political difficulties of any given moment. Humanitarian aid is an area that deserves independent thinking. I would like to see the Foreign Ministry study the matter seriously."

In yesterday's press conference, Yosano emphasized that he had simply referred to slim chances of separating the matter from other issues, effectively correcting his course. In addition, regarding General Association of Korean Residents in Japan (Chongryon) Deputy Chairman Nam Sung U's letter to the Cabinet Office yesterday asking for a removal of the ban on port calls by North Korean vessels, Yosano said: "I hear that (the Cabinet Office) will return it by contents by certified mail."

9) DPJ bills give priority to pensions, political funding;  
Farm-family supports to be presented to the regular Diet session

ASAHI (Page 1) (Excerpt)  
September 7, 2007

The Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ or Minshuto) has set the priority order for bills to be introduced in the extraordinary session of the Diet. The opposition camp will present bills in the Upper House, where it commands a majority of seats, with priority given to a bill banning the appropriation of pension premiums for any other use than pension payments, and another bill amending the Political Funds Control Law to make it obligatory to attach receipts, such as all office expenses above 1 yen. The bill to freeze privatization of postal services that the party co-sponsored and presented in August with the Social Democratic Party and the Peoples New Party will be withdrawn. The DPJ aims at presenting a bill creating a system of income supports for farm families, the showcase of the party's campaign promises in the Upper House race, in the regular Diet session next year.

10) DPJ policy chief: Opposition will pursue subsidies issue in extra Diet session

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Slightly excerpts)  
September 7, 2007

Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) Policy Research Committee Chairman Masayuki Naoshima indicated yesterday in an interview with the Nikkei that his party would look into whether to invoke the right of a Diet member to investigate state affairs in the House of

Councillors with an eye on shedding light on the issue of politics and money in the upcoming extraordinary Diet session to be convened on Sept. 10. The DPJ aims to highlight how tax money has been wasted in the Upper House, which is now controlled by the opposition camp.

Naoshima revealed that the opposition camp would prioritize the Upper House over the Lower House regarding deliberations on bills since the opposition holds a majority in the Upper House. Specifically, the opposition bloc will submit to the Upper House

three bills: (1) a bill to ban the use of pension premiums for other purposes than pension benefits; (2) a bill to revise the Political Funds Control Law requiring politicians to attach to their political fund reports receipts for expenditures of one yen or more; and (3) an agriculture policy bill designed to introduce an income security system for individual farmers. It plans to present the pension bill as early as next week.

Regarding former farm minister Takehiko Endo, who quit the post to take responsibility for a subsidies issue, Naoshima pointed out: "It is no good for a lawmaker to head such organizations enjoying government subsidies as an agriculture mutual aid association." In connection with the fact that a person who heads a public-interest corporation, which receives subsidies, became representative of a political organization of Environment Minister Masatoshi Wakabayashi, the DPJ policy chief said: "There will be big problem if a thorough investigation is carried out." Both chambers of the Diet have the right to investigate state affairs. By exercising this right, Diet members can demand that persons be called to testify as Diet witnesses and that the government present documents. The DPJ will call on the government to submit documents regarding the pension record-keeping fiasco and the issue of extending the Antiterrorism Special Measures Law.

11) Nikai faction's fund management body also failed to declare sales of party tickets totaling 1.66 million yen

MAINICHI (Top play) (Abridged slightly)  
September 7, 2007

Atarashii Nami (New Wave), the Nikai faction's political organization headed by LDP General Council Chairman Toshihiro Nikai and for which National Public Safety Commission Chairman Shinya Izumi is serving as chief accountant, failed to include in its political fund report 1.66 million yen gained from selling party tickets to Shin Seijimondai Kenkyu-kai (Chiyoda Ward, Tokyo; disbanded in late 2006), a political organization established by a former executive of a large general contractor. The fund management organizations of former Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori and former Health, Labor and Welfare Minister Jiro Kawasaki have also failed to declare sales of party tickets to the same political organization. This has exposed the sloppy political fund reporting practice among LDP executives.

The organization that bought party tickets was Shin Seijimondai Kenkyu-kai, a political organization headed by a former business manager of Nishimatsu Construction Co. (headquartered in Minato Ward) and for which a former part-time auditor was serving as the chief accountant. The person who headed the organization retired from Nishimatsu in 1995 to establish the organization and served thereafter as a board member of an affiliated company until 2004. The person who served as the chief accountant worked as Nishimatsu's auditor until 2003 and died in 2005. Shin Seijimondai Kenkyu-kai was

TOKYO 00004159 007 OF 010

dissolved in late 2006.

According to receipts and transfer slips attached to the organization's financial reports, the body bought party tickets worth 960,000 yen and 700,000 yen from Atarashii Nami, the Nikai faction's political organization, on two occasions in 2005.

The Political Funds Control Law requires political organizations to declare in their funds reports the names of those who purchased tickets worth over 200,000 yen and the exact amounts. Reports by Atarashii Nami did not include such information.

Meanwhile, Shunpu-kai, former Prime Minister Mori's fund management organization, held a fund-raising party in Tokyo in late 2004. Atarashii Nami also bought its party tickets worth 1 million yen. Further, Atarashii Nami bought party tickets totaling 600,000 yen in the same year from Hakuho-kai, the fund-management organization of former Health, Labor and Welfare Minister Kawasaki. But Kawasaki's fund management body failed to declare it.

A Nikai office source said: "It is a true that we had received money

for the tickets, and we are now investigating it thoroughly. We would like to correct our reports once the investigation is over."

The Mori office indicated through a lawyer that the incident occurred by clerical mistakes. The Kawasaki office also indicated a willingness to correct its reports after examining the facts.

12) 6 million yen in donations off books of LDP branch headed by former Prime Minister Mori: Fund reports already corrected

MAINICHI (Page 31) (Full)  
September 7, 2007

It was learned on September 6 that the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) branch in Ishikawa Constituency No. 2, headed by former Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori, corrected its political fund reports for 2004 and 2005 due to the omission of entries of donations made by Mori totaling approximately 6 million yen. An accountant of the branch office explained, "The branch donated expenses for the 2003 and 2005 Lower House elections. Mr. Mori returned surpluses. However, since we did not issue receipts, we were unable to check the flow of the money. As a result, we failed to report the returned money."

According to the correction report submitted to the prefectural election board, Mori donated 2,837,861 yen on January 30, 2004 and 2,959,916 yen on Nov. 30, 2005. The branch office accountant informed the election board of the error on Sept. 4 and corrected it the same day. Following the correction, the missed-out amounts were brought forward to the following years. The balance brought forward as of the end of 2005 came to 36,254,611 yen. The total income after the correction came to 176,795,105 yen for 2004 and 208,211,601 yen for 2005.

According to the explanation given by the accountant, the branch office in August received an order to check its fund report from the party headquarters. It realized missing entries in mid-August. This accountant noted that the office did not issue receipts, because the recipient was not a third party but the branch head. Though Mori has already been informed of the correction, he reportedly did not make any special comment on that.

TOKYO 00004159 008 OF 010

13) LDP branch headed by former Welfare Minister Niwa doubly claimed printing expenses, using copy of same receipt

MAINICHI (Page 31) (Full)  
September 7, 2007

It was found that the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) branch of Ibaraki Constituency No. 6, headed by former Welfare Minister Yuya Niwa, doubly reported printing expenses worth 510,800 yen, attaching copies of the same report to its political fund report for 2005.

The receipt used for double entries was issued by a printing firm in Ishioka City, Ibaraki Prefecture, on May 17, 2005. Two copies made from this receipt were used as printing expenses for two spending items -- public relations expenses and expenses for holding a political fund-raising party.

Niwa's office explained that it wants to correct the error immediately, noting that it was a simple clerical mistake.

Niwa has shown a cautious toward a proposal for amending the Political Fund Control Law to mandate the attachment of receipts for operational expenses topping 1 yen, noting, "It is questionable to set the amount at 1 yen."

14) Former Agriculture Minister Tamazawa might have violated Public Office Election Law

ASAHI (Page 38) (Excerpts)  
September 7, 2007

It was learned yesterday that the ruling Liberal Democratic Party's (LDP) Iwate Chapter's No. 4 Constituency Office, which had been

headed by former Agriculture Minister Tokuichiro Tamazawa, who just recently submitted to the LDP a notice of his leaving the party to take the responsibility for the use of multiple copies of one receipt in his political funds reports, had received donations during the election campaigns or immediately before the campaigns in 2003 and 2005 from several contractors who had received orders for public works projects from the central government.

The Public Office Election Law bans companies that have concluded contracts with the government from contributing money to candidates for national elections and also bans candidates from seeking donations from those companies. One of the staff for Tamazawa said, "We received donations for the sake of the elections. We had no idea about (the Public Office Election Law)."

According to the No. 4 Constituency Office's political funds reports, this office received a total of 5.3 million yen in donations in 2005, when the Lower House election was held, from at least 10 general contractors who had been engaged in public works projects commissioned by a bureau of the Agriculture Ministry.

The office also received a total of 480,000 yen in donations one week before the Lower House election or during the election campaign in 2003 from at least four general contractors who was engaged in public works projects commissioned by the central government.

When interviewed yesterday by the Asahi Shimbun about the reason why donations were made during certain periods of time, Tamazawa's secretary said, "That's because of elections." When asked about the

SIPDIS

TOKYO 00004159 009 OF 010

possibility that receiving donations by companies that had concluded contracts with the central government might have been a violation of the Public Office Election Law, the secretary said: "We had no knowledge about that. We'd like to follow the judgment of voters and authorities."

15) Administrative Vice MAFF Minister Kobayashi to resign

ASAHI (Page 1) (Excerpts)  
September 7, 2007

The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) decided to promote Fisheries Agency Director General Toshiro Shirasu, 56, to the administrative vice minister's post as the successor to Yoshio Kobayashi, 58. If all goes smoothly, his appointment will be announced today.

In MAFF, Takehiko Endo quit the minister post on the 3rd to take responsibility for an agricultural mutual aid association he headed having improperly received government subsidies. Political observers expect that the replacement of administrative vice minister at this time means that Kobayashi will resign to take responsibility for a series of problems in the ministry.

16) Star DPJ lawmakers hit by scandals

SANKEI (Page 5) (Abridged slightly)  
September 7, 2007

A gloomy atmosphere is surrounding the major opposition Democratic Party of Japan due to weekly magazine reports on scandals involving Yumiko Himei and Yoshiro Yokomine, the party's star candidates in the July House of Councillors election.

DPJ President Ichiro Ozawa yesterday called Himei representing the Okayama electoral district to party headquarters in order to learn in person about her reported extramarital affair.

According to a person concerned, Ozawa advised Himei to practice caution so as not to provide juicy stories to the media. The source quoted Himei as saying in response that she would do her utmost in implementing policies to meet public expectations and that she would firmly assist President Ozawa, who aims at a change of government.



Meanwhile, Yoshiro Yokomine, the father of professional golfer Sakura Yokomine, offered an apology in the wake of Weekly Shincho's report on his having played golf for money. Secretary General Yukio Hatoyama warned him severely.

Yokomine has filed a damage lawsuit against publisher Shinchosha Publishing Co. and others. Despite that, the Weekly Shincho's latest issue that went on sale yesterday carried a follow-on report on Yokomine.

A mid-level DPJ lawmaker grumbled: "Enough is enough. We must concentrate on taking the reins of government."

17) APEC ministerial: Japan, US vs. China on product safety: Confrontation also over patent screening

YOMIURI (Page 11) (Excerpts)  
September 7, 2007

TOKYO 00004159 010 OF 010

An Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum (APEC) ministerial meeting yesterday ended, adopting a joint statement. Confrontation between Japan and the US on one side and China on the other was visible during the meeting over the drafting of a joint statement concerning a product safety issue and procedures for the screening of intellectual property rights. Regarding the initiative of APEC aiming at concluding free trade agreements involving all member nations, the joint statement characterized it only in equivocal terms with Japan, the US and China motivated by different desires.

The three countries were at odds over the product safety issue. The joint statement noted that member nations should tackle the issue in connection with each country's effort to secure the safety of their own products. Behind the move is that the detection of harmful substances from Chinese toys has developed into a social problem in many countries, especially in the US. The decision was made to include the issue in the statement, as the US took strong interest in the problem, as a senior official of the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry put it.

China opposed the inclusion of the issue in the statement, noting that it is taking strict measures. In response, participants decided not to single out China. Foreign Minister Downer of host nation Australia during a press conference after the meeting gave consideration to China, noting, "The statement does not target China."

The US and South Korea supported Japan's proposal for speeding up a patent screening process, staging a skirmish.

Japan and several other countries proposed an action program for unifying patent application forms within APEC and mutually using screening results. However, China was reluctant to comply with the idea, noting that it involves too much work, such as making application forms available abroad and translating documents into English. The statement in the end did not include this proposal.

DONOVAN